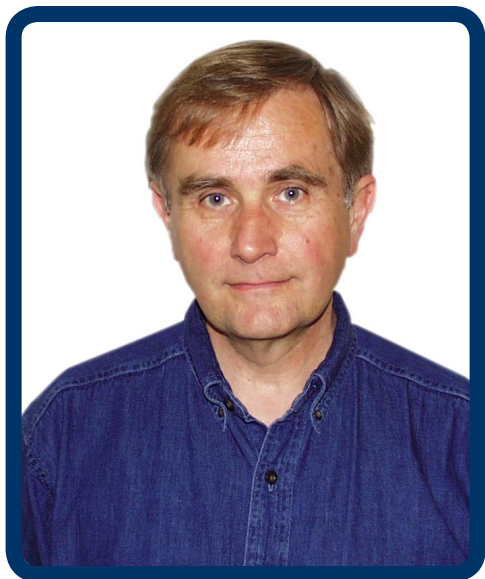




# Astronomer Research Scientist



**Dr. Dale P. Cruikshank**  
Astronomer,  
Research Scientist

NASA Ames Research Center

I study the planets and small bodies in the solar system, using Earth-based and space-based telescopes, as well as probes to the planets. I use special instruments to learn what the bodies are made of. I also measure the temperatures of the comets, asteroids, planetary satellites, and other objects in the solar system to learn details about them.

## Areas of expertise:

- Infrared astronomy
- Planetary physics
- Planetary geology

## How I first became interested in this profession:

As a grade-school student, my first love was chemistry. At age 14, I was able to view a total eclipse of the Sun that took place near my hometown. From that time forward, I knew that I had to be an astronomer.

## What helped prepare me for this job:

I have been reading and studying astronomy and the other physical sciences since I was 13 years old. I built telescopes and pursued amateur astronomy and rocketry as a student in middle school and high school. In college, I studied math, chemistry, geology and physics to prepare me for a career in planetary science and astronomy. Several people, including my parents, have encouraged and helped me along the way.

## My role models or inspirations:

As a child, my role model was an astronomer named Seth Nicholson. Like Galileo, he discovered four moons of Jupiter.

## My education and training:

- Bachelor of Science degree in Physics, Iowa State University.
- Master of Science and Ph.D. (doctorate) degrees in Planetary Geology, University of Arizona.

## My career path:

- Astronomer and Planetary Scientist at the Universities of Arizona and Hawaii for 20 years
- Astronomer at NASA for 12 1/2 years

## What I like about my job:

It is both a pleasure and a privilege to make some contribution, no matter how small, to science and our knowledge of the universe in which we live. As an astronomer and planetary scientist I have freedom to work on the things that interest me, to collaborate with very intelligent people all over the world, and to make a contribution to the exploration of the solar system.

## What I don't like about my job:

I sometimes have to deal with government rules and responsibilities that take time away from my research.

## My advice to anyone interested in this occupation:

Read all you can find about the subject. Buy or make a telescope and use it to study the planets and stars. Also, visit a local observatory and planetarium. Develop a love for math and science, and take all the science and math courses your school offers. Begin to imagine yourself as an explorer of the universe! You can do it!